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Culebra?

From the Spanish-English Dictionary of the estimable Professor MARIANO VELAZQUEZ DE LA CADENA we copy this somewhat sinister definition:

"Culebra (coo-lay-brah) f. 1. Snake. 2. Trick, fun, joke. 3. The worm, spiral part of a still. 4. Disorder, confusion suddenly caused by a few in a peaceful assembly. 'Sabe más que las culebras' (Coll.). He is very crafty and cunning. 'Culebra de cascabel,' a rattlesnake."

Is it a snake in its venomous and treacherous habit of unexpected striking? Is it a joke on the American people who have spent a hundred millions or so to conquer it? Is it the worm that turns at last upon the persistent aggressor? Is it the creator of sudden disorder in the programme for the peaceful celebration of a great historic event; or, perchance, of sudden confusion in the war plans of naval strategy at some crisis in the nation's fortunes? Is it a very crafty and cunning Culebra cut in the Panama Canal one of all of these things?

Certainly, Culebra is the heel of Achilles in the anatomy of our inter-oceanic waterway, that engineering triumph of all the ages. In the vast achievement which has overcome nature and pierced the continental divide and joined the waters of the Atlantic with those of the Pacific Culebra is the one member still vulnerable to nature's reprisals. And the wound to Culebra is paralysis of the entire canal.

A few men really know, and a considerable number in Congress and elsewhere are beginning to suspect the truth. Colonel GOETHALS undoubtedly knows. Colonel GAILLARD, who gave his valuable life in a struggle with the craft and cunning of the creature, knew only too well where the trouble lay and what the symptoms portended.

We wonder whether any definite purpose of patriotic or governmental expedience is served by continuing to ignore officially and blink optimistically the geological mystery that lies not on the banks of the great Culebra cut but buried profoundly behind its slopes. For it is not a question of superficial landslides and the limit of the possibilities thereof, and the mechanical methods of prevention, but of underlying strata and faults of formation the extent of which is at present an unknown factor in the canal's future.

As the Sowing Was, So Shall the Reaping Be.

Man craves tragedy, and is frequently deceived by the pseudo-tragic. The moral essence of tragedy is not temptation but the will, stout in resistance or, if deliberately yielding, strong as Satan in its defiance of the smug world's censure and ready to "take the consequences" in fair trade. Fate has lost ground in human affairs since Eschylus. There is no inevitability of penalty paying for violations of what is loosely called the moral law and might better be denoted the moral force that permeates the universal constitution. Some who sin suffer visibly; many get off seemingly scot free; for the little few conscience snuggles unseen and gnaws his victims' vitals without publicity. Perhaps the "good" carry more of this world's overt troubles than the "bad" have to bear.

A "case" gets into the newspapers, and attracts attention widely overlapping the boundaries of sensationalism; its apparent content of the sincere milk of human "experience" commands it to the thoughtful consideration of the unromantic. A mother has poisoned herself and her two babies. Their father is another woman's husband, divorced from a third woman willing to make him happy. The man has been keeping up two homes, each in appearance conventionally orthodox; one of them hers. It looks like a plot for the novelist: rather deficient in stress for the purposes of the dramatist. Judgment is deferred, for there is no logic of homicide and suicide in the superlatives of the story; there must be hidden factors.

The woman's part in the history develops. She has been waiting for the man to get his second divorce, make her legally his wife and give her little son and daughter proper place in life. There is mention of money, a debt, as reported, to the lawful wife. The mis-

ing element seems about to materialize the motive to appear.

At last the truth. The woman herself had been previously married, and had gone through the divorce court believing it that way to her own true happiness and that of the tripartite. Let no one cast the first stone. Who knows the mind of the man or of the woman? Who of mortal men shall judge the quality of their acts?

But the trail of the "case": one man robbed of a home; one woman, seemingly not hurt, married and divorced; another, the legal wife, prostrated with grief or wounded pride or both; another woman dying, two children dead; and the nexus of the melancholy complication, the man who spun this web of suffering and sorrow—what of him? The woman in the hospital—what of her? There is guilt, before the law, and greater guilt before that Higher Court whose judgments are unerring.

The tragedies of the world's "great white ways" are wretchedly simple; people dismiss them with a shrug and a single expressive expletive: "Earned." They are lamentable, but some folks seem born to "go wrong." Notism on a troubled sea. But this is a chapter in another book.

People need "lessons," and in their hidden hearts they want them. Set aside the inborn, nearly universal passion for uttering judgment; let neither sympathy nor censure obscure the moral vision; and say if in this wretched tangle there is not the most moving demonstration of the wisdom of standing by a mistake once made unless a lawful, decent and honorable way out is available; of paying for your own mistakes instead of assigning the debt to others. The virtue of ten thousand sermons has been compressed into this newspaper "story," printed one day to be forgotten the next.

The Master's Servant.

So recently that not the most sensitive young woman who can no longer call herself a bud need blush to recall it as a personal recollection was the automobile a wheezing, halting, unworkable engine of uncertainty, provoking the astonishment of the populace and the profanity of its operator. It set forth in the glad morning with never an assurance of return before the midnight hour struck; it performed inexplicable feats of disintegration; it exploded for pure pleasure, balked as a regular and expected incident of its daily career, spun wonderfully, charged without excuse, slid mysteriously to the rear, the side, crabwise; it did all that was not wanted, and only occasionally fulfilled the hope of its venturesome owner which he scarcely dared to form into a prophecy.

How marvelously a few years and the unskilled application of brains and capital have transformed those ancient arks! To-day no instrument of man's use and pleasure is more dependable, more responsive, more surely adapted to his needs. To line and contour the refining influence of practical art has been successfully applied; the body fits frames the marvellous mechanism of the engine, to the completion and correction of which high inventive genius has been devoted. In every detail of the whole complicated device are revealed the laborious efforts of uncounted experimenters, innovators, the men with that superior curiosity that ever inspires dissatisfaction and the determination to improve, until the beneficiary of all these coordinated and collected strivings for perfection would cry "It is done!" It did not experience warm him that it is not done.

Questioned, condemned as a toy, yesterday, to-day the motor car supports war, sustains commerce, caters to all human needs and wants and pleasures. It has made a new world for all men; the boundary lines of the attainable have been pushed back by this rubber mounted, gas sustained, distance destroying servant. It is the magic carpet of the fairy story, and better; for where there was only one magic carpet, the motor car counts its scores of thousands, by ingenuity, persistence, enterprise and skill laid out for all to make their choice and transport themselves where they will.

Now May City Hall Have Rest?

City Hall has finally been restored to its original condition, according to the plans of its architect. There has been a commendable tearing out of the intrusive contributions of the years that have intervened since the building was opened for occupancy, and where the working drawings of the structure have been available they have been followed closely. Consequently this restoration does not signify the dismal process the word usually describes, and the town has every right to be proud of what has been accomplished.

To the public spirit and good taste of Mrs. SAGE the initiative in this whole enterprise may fairly be credited. Others saw the desirability of the reconstruction she put into operation and assisted her in pushing the scheme, but it was her idea to make the Governor's room what it was when the building was erected that gave form and body to the movement. It has taken several years to complete the necessary changes, but the time has been well spent.

Having done this the town should now insist that the building be maintained as it is. For generations it has been the practice to alter it to accommodate the fancies of each incoming administration. To this habit is to be attributed the defacement and concealment of its interior beauties. Now that they are again visible City Hall deserves to be let alone.

The Shipping Interests and the Ship Purchase Bill.

In the Senate on Monday Mr. Root of New York opposed the ship purchase bill because, among other reasons, it proposed "to embark the Government of the United States at very large expense in a business venture of a kind in which the private enterprise of the United States has uniformly met with less rather than with profit." What makes the action of the President and his subservient friends in Congress pe-

culiarly exasperating to the private shipping and ship building interests is that the war in Europe presented them with a legitimate opportunity to engage profitably in Atlantic transportation and the ship purchase bill has compelled them to forego it.

Soon after the war began the British ship building industry found itself in sore need of men and materials and could not fill the orders that poured in. The demand for Atlantic cargo ships could not be met. If an American exporter went into the market for a tramp steamer he was lucky to charter one in the year 1915, and if he could find a ship disengaged the price he would have to pay for it seemed extortionate. So scarce were ships and so high were freight rates that American builders calculated that the war were to last until the middle of 1915 an American built ship would earn her first cost in the foreign trade, and that when interned tonnage in many ports was released at the end of the war and the old stress of Atlantic competition had to be faced they could use their new ships in the coastwise trade under enrollment.

It was certainly a grand opportunity. There had been nothing like it since the old flush days of American supremacy in merchant shipping. For the first time in more than a generation the domestic yards could turn out ships as cheaply as the British, and the ship could be manned and operated at a handsome profit. But the opportunity might not last long. Elaborate plans were made to take advantage of it and capital was provided, when the Administration under some malign influence decided to go into the carrying trade and regulate rates. It was, indeed, "a reversal of the natural order of things," to quote Mr. Wilson, and he did not seem to understand the perverseness of his reasoning that "the routes of trade must be actually opened, by many ships and regular sailings and moderate charges, before streams of merchandise will flow freely and profitably through them."

The ship building and shipping interests were getting ready to open those trade routes with free ships and take all the merchandise offered for transportation when the President's Government ship purchase bill was put forward, in the guise of a benefaction, to blast a meritorious and legitimate enterprise. There was no more planning to revive American shipping. The field was abandoned to the Government, since there could be no competition with the Government. Nothing more economically vicious was ever proposed at Washington, and if the unworkable measure is "jammed through" Congress a day of reckoning will come with disastrous results to all concerned. The blow will fall with cumulative effect upon what is left of the American shipping industry.

Government Certification of Invoices.

Cable despatches from London say that the British Government sees a great relief in the proposed plan that the United States shall certify American cargoes as to their exact contents before they leave American ports.

Why should not England be relieved by the action of this country in taking on itself the onerous and delicate duty which the British navy now has to perform?

But it is quite another question as to whether American citizens should feel relieved because their Government is taking such a responsibility. What is to be the scope of the American inspection? Will it be a mere certification or will it involve exclusion of contraband or doubtful commodities? And if there is to be exclusion, what will be the basis? Will the prohibition of one belligerent or the demand of another govern it? And if there be mere certification and if such certification show the cargo to be in whole or part obnoxious to the prohibitions of any belligerent will such belligerent be allowed to use the certification as a proof warranting seizure and confiscation?

It does not seem quite certain that the plan will solve all the problems of ocean traffic in war time. It seems not improbable that it may bring in some new elements of friction in which both parties involved will be severer powers.

Usually the issue is between a Government and a private shipper, a condition which, though alike in theory, is much less dangerous in fact.

Must We Have Congress Always in Session?

Except for the six weeks that intervened between October 24 and December 7 the Congress has been in session without interruption since April 7, 1913, or practically throughout the whole of President Wilson's term to date. It has established a record for length of session, and has tested thoroughly the endurance of the country. When the short session began it was hoped that March 3 would bring a rest for legislators and nation until the constitutional meeting of the Sixty-fourth Congress next December, but that happy prospect is fading.

Every day brings from Washington new and fear inspiring reports of the inability of the lawmakers to complete the Presidential programme. Even without general legislation there is not too much time for the appropriation bills, and of general legislation there is an appalling amount. Ship purchase and operation, rural credits, some new laws to improve the already three perfected anti-trust statutes, the Philippine bill; a mere catalogue of the various enterprises, many of them highly controversial, on which the Administration, after a year and a half of steady grinding, is still engaged, would fill a good sized book. And to add to the congestion the majority has a pretty patronage fight within its ranks and a skillful minority is laying the foundation for a filibuster in the Senate.

In Mr. TAYLOR'S term Congress was in session 935 days. Mr. ROOSEVELT in his second term had the lawmakers in his

him 567 days; in his first term they were on duty the same period. Mr. McKINLEY, with a war to manage, got along with sessions aggregating 711 days. Mr. WILSON bids fair to outdo them all, and even without an extra session this spring will surpass the record of Mr. CLEVELAND'S last term, in which House and Senate sat 727 days. It cannot be maintained that Mr. Wilson has had more difficult problems, or more of them, than his predecessors. Yet the Congress during the present Democratic Administration bids fair to be permanently in session, engaged on a programme each incident of which necessitates new shifts of law making, and, unhappily, new demands on the taxpayers. Truly, the American people are longer suffering. Were they not, the threat of an extra session of the Sixty-fourth Congress would elicit a roar of disapproval that would be heard even through the almost soundproof walls of the White House.

Vice-Admiral Sir JOHN JELlicoe in a letter to his brother says that "we spent Christmas Day waiting for the Germans, who did not appear," and that church services were held on decks cleared for action. The Germans might pertinently ask if Sir John expected their fleet to seek an engagement at the British base, as it is well known that the battleships are not patrolling the North Sea.

Governor CARRANZA'S readiness to sacrifice his brother General JESUS CARRANZA for principle must be rather interesting to the general, who has been the fighting CARRANZA of insurgent Mexico. He lately fell into the hands of a marauder who calls himself "General" SANTIBANZ. In return for a pardon and "other concessions" SANTIBANZ offers to release General JESUS. The illustrious elder brother waves aside the traitor. "If my brother dies," he says, "it is necessary step toward the triumph of our principles and establishment of peace. I am willing that he die." The late ARTEMUS WARD would have found VENUSTIANO an "amozino" cousin.

I am of the opinion that the great majority of those who are conducting our public service corporations are more ready honestly to cooperate for real progress and efficiency than are the representatives of the people, the politicians, amateur reformers, professional reformers and know it all cranks. From speech by President HENRY HARTWELL of Stevens Institute at Brown University.

It is a strange thing how every one talks against the politicians, accusing them of selfishness, incompetence and bad faith, yet tolerates or even approves the substitution of their crude blundering for the trained intellect and the great mind of statesmen who have devoted their lives to the development of public utilities. The cry is for business in politics; the drift is to politics in business—a strange and sad contradiction.

The estimates ought to be cut. The working people have to pay for all this damned foolishness.—Representative QUINN of Mississippi.

The working people will have to pay a great deal more when this country gets into war.—Representative GARDNER of Massachusetts.

Mr. GARDNER, the veteran, is right. The Hon. PERCY EDWARDS QUINN of Mississippi, Pike county, Mississippi, the freshman in Congress, has only to observe how the "peepul" in Europe are being taught to plan and execute a great war to realize that his friend GARDNER is right. The damned foolishness consists in disregarding the lesson which the unpreparedness of England for the unavertible conflict teaches.

The Chilean Government has decided to send the battleship Capitán Prat, the finest vessel in the Chilean navy, to take part in the international naval parade in the port of the formal opening of the Panama Canal.—Santiago despatch.

It may be doubted whether the Capitán Prat is the "finest vessel" in the Chilean navy, but the distinction of being the only battleship flying the flag belongs to the Capitán Prat. Two dreadnoughts, the Almirante Cochrane and the Almirante Lynch, were building for Chile in an English yard when war was declared. These sister ships were to be of 28,000 tons displacement and to carry batteries of ten 14 inch guns and sixteen 6 inch guns. The latter has probably been completed by this time, and the Cochrane should be ready for commission before the end of this year. England has taken over both ships under the terms of the builders' contract.

The armored cruiser O'Higgins would make a better appearance at the Canal naval parade than the Capitán Prat, which looks like the old Chicago, a vessel whose lines were not graceful. The O'Higgins weighs 8,500 tons, as compared with a displacement of 7,000 tons for the Capitán Prat, is a handsome three funnel cruiser of more modern design and carries batteries approximately as powerful as those of the lone battleship. Preference seems to be given to the Capitán Prat as the flagship of the Chilean navy.

Miss PANKHURST to lecture here.—Headline.

No escape from war conditions.

Thoughts on Arcades.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir, Your rendering of Arcades among us, two of a kind, is all right except that in Byron's "Arcades" there is nothing in Byron's writings more characteristic than "black-guards both," and in truth it is not so far out as might be supposed. Virgil's yokes knew no Arcades, and in such a way as to lead any one to suppose that it is a print of the "Tipperary" words and music.

Sailing Directions for Baltic Ports. TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: Great Britain has laid much stress upon the necessity of ships going through the English Channel and then, under charge of competent pilots, along the coast of France, to the Baltic. It requires a Captain Cuttle to appreciate the humor of this.

For by going north of the Shetlands, the national and shortest course from New York to the Baltic is by the coast of the Shetlands through the Skagerak and Kattegat between Denmark and Sweden, where of course no mines can be laid. As mines cannot be laid there, the danger is of course 350 feet and the depths on the route mentioned are at least six times that. It is obvious that the danger is "all in my eye," and the advice given "pour le coup."

LA O'RA, Pinar del Rio, Cuba, December 22, 1914.

Where is Higinio Balder?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: I venture to beg you to carry a notice of 350 fathoms to be kind enough to try to find for me the address, if he is alive, of Higinio Balder of Reil, my cousin. He was born in the town of Santa Clara, and came to the United States some years ago. I cannot tell how many, to go into business. It is important for me to know where he is, if he is still alive, and the advice given "pour le coup."

LA O'RA, Pinar del Rio, Cuba, December 22, 1914.

THE MESSAGE ON CONTRABAND.

Condemned by One Who Values Friendly Relations With England.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: Fifty American bullets on the frontier, and there has been hardly a protest. But what a vigorous message to the British Government has been sent because England examines our steamers for contraband!

Great Britain has fostered and built up a powerful navy at great expense, and when her empire is in danger she is going to make full use of her navy, this country or any other notwithstanding. Why should she not examine thoroughly ships bound for neutral ports carrying cargoes of copper far beyond the need of the country receiving it and secretly destined for a country at war with Great Britain? But the bottom of nearly every ship bound for Denmark or Holland there is contraband for a belligerent, and it is often fairly involved.

Great Britain has supported her navy for years to use it in just such an emergency as this, and I hope she will enjoy the reward of her preparedness. England is not going to take any chances with her navy, even though it is shipped to a neutral port. We should accept damages and be satisfied.

The attitude of the people of this country, save for Germans, Austrians and a few Fenians, is friendly to Great Britain in this hour of her trial. She is besides our best friend. Now, why should this friendly spirit have been endangered by a message that is likely to be abortive of any good result?

Every thoughtful man I meet protests against the false attitude which Mr. Wilson's message puts the American people in. If this country has a friend, let us keep that friend. What can be gained by a message as Mr. Wilson has despatched to England?

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

NEW YORK, January 4.

CATS.

Humane Sentiments of the Manhattan Philosopher.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: "M. N. J. M. D." seems to think that it is a great joke for a poor cat to starve to death in the streets. He says, "If he would put himself in such weather as we are having at present and that would be infinitely louder than the poor cat does."

The fact is that heartless miscreants who put cats out at night to freeze and starve to death should be put in jail. When you read the news of a cat, a license or death? I say, for cats, a home or death? E. H. J.

NEW YORK, January 5.

Political Aspects of the Neglected Feline.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: The letter published in this issue this morning concerning cats was of unusual interest to me. I have been in search of a lost cat these past twenty-four hours, a "harmless, necessary" pet, kind, affectionate, intelligent, friendly, and so on.

Surely there is no animal more abused or misunderstood than these soft, purring little felines.

Give your correspondent that the Mayor he suggests will soon hold office, but I fear his election will only come through the institution of woman's suffrage in this State.

A LOVER OF CATS.

Push the Beautiful.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: The cat is more graceful than modern dancers, spottier or stockier.

When you read of the beautiful, after gazing upon some of our wonderful two legged bits of fur in spats, will not welcome the cat as it "winks in beauty, like the night and now, and then, and graceful, and so on."

It may be that they eat too much real terrapin nights: so dream of cats.

JAMES D. DREWELL, JR.

NEW HAVEN, Conn., January 5.

The Deep and Cunning Cat.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: "M. N. J. M. D." is hard on cats. He says cats transmit ringworm, tapeworm, diphtheria and paratyphoid fever, to say nothing of rabies and other diseases. So a cat is a "harmless, necessary" and "necessary," as Shakespeare averred.

I must confess to a solemn awe of cats. I suppose a cat might do almost anything, even spread disease, but I find it a little flippant to speak of a "harmless necessary cat." Unless appearances belie it there is a great deal of inner wisdom hidden away in a cat. Cats are deep, and they are not given to light chatter and irrelevancy as are dogs. A dog is a Philistine, a bonehead, but a cat is an aesthete and a joy, a model of Aurelian conduct.

I have made the acquaintance of two excellent cats who live below stairs in the kitchen. They have all the inherent virtues of cats and they are good mousers.

WATSON WHITE.

NEW YORK, January 5.

Beware the Curb "Tipperary."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—Sir: Publicity should be given to a barefaced though petty swindler who has been in the streets of New York. This is the sale by street vendors for a nickel of a publication got up with the evident intention of deceiving purchasers into the belief that it is the famous music of the much talked of Tipperary war song.

On the outer side of the publication, which is the size of sheet music, are displayed the words "It's a long, long way to Tipperary" with an Irish picture on a green ground, and what purports to be the name and address of the publisher.

The inside of the words of the famous song are printed in small type, with seven pages of words of other songs.

There is not a line of music of the Tipperary song, but the possibility of deception is increased by including in the publication three pages of music of what is said to be a song from "Carmen," and in the copy purchased two pages of this music, which is not music at all, but the title of this music could not be perceived. There follow nine more pages of advertisements of the publisher's wares. Finally, the publication is cried out and displayed on the streets in such a way as to lead any one to suppose that it is a print of the "Tipperary" words and music.

BROOKLYN, January 5.

Sailing Directions for Baltic Ports.

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LA O'RA, Pinar del Rio, Cuba, December 22, 1914.

GOETHALS DOESN'T FEAR CANAL SLIDES.

Optimistic Over Naval Pageant Plans in Testifying Before House Committee.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5.—Col. Goethals seems to be optimistic over conditions in the Canal Zone, even in regard to the slides. He is also pleased with the canal defenses.

In testifying to-day before the House Committee on Appropriations Col. Goethals was closely questioned relative to the recent slides in the Culebra Cut. These slides, according to Col. Goethals, are still in progress. He was unable to say how long they will continue.

He said dredges work twenty hours a day to maintain a width of channel of 100 feet and a depth of 35 feet. Col. Goethals added that by this means the waterway could be kept open. He said he would make no prediction about the slides he seemed to be optimistic over the situation generally in the Canal Zone.

The Colonel was asked specifically if he thought there would be any difficulty in putting the battleship fleet through to the Pacific in March when it is planned to transfer the fleet incident to the celebration of the Panama Exposition at San Francisco.

Col. Goethals would not commit himself on this point, but he gave the impression that he had not entirely given up hope of carrying out the contemplated naval demonstration.

The House committee was also told to-day that the Panama Canal is adequately fortified. It will be needed to destroy the works on either side of the waterway. This testimony was given not only by Col. Goethals, but by Gen. Weaver and Gen. Crozier, chief of ordnance.

It was brought out in the hearing that so far the Government has expended \$12,050,000 on the canal, and that \$2,000,000 additional will be expended in the fiscal year beginning July 1 next.

While the hearing of Col. Goethals and Gen. Weaver and Crozier was held behind closed doors a member of the committee said it was the opinion of experts that it would be extremely hazardous for a hostile fleet to get within range of the guns at either end of the canal.

Col. Goethals appeared primarily to discuss the estimates of the amount of work on the Canal Zone in the new fiscal year. Gen. Weaver and Crozier appeared to go over the estimates of the appropriations required for the defense of the Canal Zone and elsewhere in the United States and its possessions.

As a result of the recent agitation for larger appropriations for purposes of defense, Gen. Weaver and Crozier were closely questioned as to the effectiveness of the fortifications on the Atlantic and Pacific terminals of the canal.

They testified that the defenses were in the highest state of effectiveness and took occasion to say that Congress had invariably allowed appropriations for the annual estimates submitted by the Secretary of War.

It was brought out that the defenses of Panama consist of 14 inch, 12 inch and 6 inch guns and one 16 inch gun. They testified that the defenses were in the highest state of effectiveness and took occasion to say that Congress had invariably allowed appropriations for the annual estimates submitted by the Secretary of War.

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NAVY TO DECIDE ON CANAL TRIP.

Goethals Says Water Fell Seven Feet in One Day.